

HYDROCOTYLE UMBELLATA IN NOVA SCOTIA

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During the summer of 1921 Professor M.L. Fernald found *Hydrocotyle umbellata* in Yarmouth County, southwestern Nova Scotia: "Wet sandy and gravelly margin of St. John (Wilson's) Lake; first time east of Massachusetts. Very rare and local and appearing like a waif washed down from some as yet undiscovered station farther up the valley of the Tusket".¹ This plant was not seen again in Nova Scotia for over fifty years. In 1975, while the author was carrying out a survey of the coastal plain plants in Kejimikujik National Park, situated in the center of the province south of Annapolis, this plant was found in four different locations up to five miles apart: twice on Jeremy Bay, a few scattered plants on the east side of Lake Kejimikujik, and in a cove on the north end of George Lake.

Most of the plants were growing in the water with the leaf-blades on long slender petioles and floating on the surface. Occasionally, small plants up to two inches high were found on the muddy shores where the water had receded. The water level became relatively low in 1975, and one plant exposed on the shore of George Lake showed a flower-stalk in bud on the first of September. Water levels during the next two years were normal or higher. No flowering material was seen and the plants sometimes grew in water 18 inches deep with petioles up to two feet long.

During August, 1978, lake-levels were exceptionally low. The *Hydrocotyle*, which had been barely visible in previous years, was exposed on the muddy flats and formed large open patches with tangled horizontal rootstocks and numerous erect leaves and flowering stalks.

Meanwhile, in 1977, the plant was rediscovered in Yarmouth County by Mr. Joseph Johnson — in the same lake but apparently at the opposite end from where Fernald had picked it up fifty-six years earlier. The location was difficult to find, for the name of the lake had changed and it appeared on more recent maps of the county as Bennet Lake.

This location was visited September 1, 1978, when the water was again abnormally low, much as in 1921 when Fernald stated that the

¹Fernald, 1922, p. 179.

summer was phenomenally dry, to the point of extreme drouth. Along a dry stream-bed leading south to the north end of the lake was a luxuriant growth of Skunk Cabbage, here at the extreme northeastern edge of its range. A meadow nearer the lake had scattered patches of *Sabatia Kennedyana* in flower, with mats of *Proserpinaca pectinata* in the lower areas. At the lake the silty and gravelly margin had hundreds of flowering plants and established seedlings of the *Sabatia* and of *Coreopsis rosea*; while along the cove at the northern tip of the lake, growing on the muddy exposed lake-bed, was half an acre of the *Hydrocotyle* with large numbers of the plants in flower.

As with some other coastal plain plants which range south to Mexico, *Hydrocotyle umbellata* is also found on the West Coast and has been reported, by Boivin, from British Columbia.

REFERENCES

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